

3.14.2008 - Rahall: Budget Investment To Benefit Working Families, Boost Economy

U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall, D-WV, cast his vote late Thursday in support of a House budget resolution that rejects harmful spending cuts made by the President in favor of investing in education, healthcare, and infrastructure priorities that benefit West Virginia's working families and boost the American economy.

"President Bush's budget slashes essential programs such as Medicare and Medicaid at a time when working West Virginians need them most," said Rahall. "In stark contrast to the President's harmful cuts, our budget provides crucial infrastructure investment needed to turn our Nation's faltering economy around."

The House budget resolution corrects these harmful cuts, by rejecting the President's \$195 billion cut to Medicare and Medicaid that would endanger West Virginia's 341,000 Medicare and 300,000 Medicaid recipients' access to healthcare services, and cuts made to a host of other domestic programs, which allow many hard-working West Virginia families to lead healthy, productive lives.

"In order to restore our National economy, we must focus our efforts from the inside out—beginning with our local schools and communities," said Rahall. "The House budget passed today extends tax relief to working families, improves federal student aid programs, and expands children's healthcare. By reducing the skyrocketing cost of education and healthcare for working parents, we are working to create a highly skilled and educated workforce, which our country needs to remain competitive in the global economy."

The House budget provides tax relief for over 20 million American households, by providing an immediate and long-term Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) fix, as well as middle-income tax cuts and other tax relief measures.

Additionally, the budget puts West Virginia's hard-working families first, by providing a \$50 billion increase in funding above previous levels for the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), a \$7.1 billion increase above the President's request for vital education, job training, and social services programs for 2009. It also modernizes the Higher Education Act, making college education more affordable for working families.

"It gives me great pleasure to once again take our brave soldiers, veterans, and local law enforcement officers off the President's budgetary chopping block," Rahall said. "These men and women risk their lives in the name of national security and now they are getting the long-overdue funding worthy of their sacrifice."

The House budget addresses the needs of America's veterans by rejecting the President's proposed new fees and increasing veterans funding for 2009 by \$3.6 billion (8 percent) above current services to keep pace with inflation, allowing the VA to treat 5.8 million patients in 2009, including 333,275 veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The budget also protects Americans at home by restoring homeland security funding cut from the President's request and rejecting the President's cuts to first responder programs, including Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grants

(JAG), and firefighter assistance grants.

"As Vice Chairman and long-time member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I have been a long-time advocate of using infrastructure investment to revitalize the economy—across the nation and especially here in West Virginia," said Rahall. "I am pleased that the budget resolution includes an Infrastructure Investment Reserve Fund, which will accommodate legislation to "Rebuild America" in FY 2009.

To strengthen America's transportation infrastructure, the House budget provides \$41.2 billion in federal investment for highway programs, \$10.3 billion for transit programs, \$1.3 billion for highway safety, and \$3.9 billion in grants to improve airports. The budget also rejects the administration's proposal to cut funding for the Army Corps of Engineers by \$845 million in FY 2009, and instead provides increased funding to address the backlog of water resources development projects, including those authorized by the Water Resources Development Act of 2007.

"This budget provides for proven programs that will boost economic growth, create jobs, make America safer, and, in short, make the critical investments needed to combat our current financial woes," said Rahall. "I am proud to have cast my vote for this fiscally responsible budget that is both a step in the right direction for our Nation's economy and in-tune with the needs of hard-working West Virginians."